

August 23, 1956

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31 Vinyard Hill Road
London S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

Mr. Peter Seaby suggested that I write to you in connection with a monograph I am writing on the copper coinage of early America. My research at this time is on the subject of the counterfeit British halfpence used in America.

Strangely enough, in 1787 and 1788 a group of Americans, at Machins Mills, New York, counterfeited British halfpence. I have specific proof from the letter punches and hub punches that these were made in America because they tie in to the state coinage of the period either by miling or die comparison. Tremendous quantities of British counterfeit halfpence were shipped to America and freely circulated until 1789. You may be familiar with the foregoing but I would like to ask you two specific questions. In your opinion were any copper halfpence with evasive legends intended for the American market or were they circulated in Britain? In all the research I have done the only counterfeits I have found in America are those which contained the identical legend of the British halfpence. The others, as listed in Atkins, such as "George III Rules", "God Save the King," etc. were, apparently, made to avoid the 1771 law in England and dated back, in some instances, to appear old. I realize that some of these evasions were made earlier but from Atkins' list I note there are over 100 dated 1771.

My second question is whether the word "Bungtown" has any meaning in England or was ever used in England referring to coppers of any kind. Today, the word "Bungtown" to numismatists in America means copper without proper legends. In the eighteenth century I believe it meant counterfeit halfpence as such. Occasionally we call the counterfeit halfpence Birmingham halfpence or Brumagens but the word "Bungtown" definitely referred to Birmingham and indicated that Birmingham was a "cut purse" town since their coinage had the effect of robbing the people.

I have often wondered how extensively the halfpence with improper legends circulated in England. Certainly the text of their legends referred to English subjects primarily.

-2-

August 23, 1956

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31 Vinyard Hill Road
London S.W. 19, England

In my own person collection I have several hundred different British counterfeit halfpence principally dated 1775. I have some dated 1776, 1777, 1781 and 1785 which are dates when no regal coinage was issued as well as American counterfeit British halfpence dated 1776, 1778, 1787 and 1788. Do you have in your collection any counterfeit halfpence dated 1777 or thereafter?

I would be very pleased to hear from you with respect to the foregoing and I hope that it will not be an inconvenience for you to do so.

I saw Mr. Seaby the day before I left London and if I would have had an opportunity to discuss the matter with you I would have.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

C. Wilson Peck
31 Vineyard Hill Rd., London, S.W.19.

B. A. SEABY, LTD.
NUMISMATISTS,
65 GREAT PORTLAND STREET,
LONDON, W.1.

TELEPHONE - - LANGHAM 3677.

Writing on English Copper
cannon incl ctps.

MR. PETER SEABY.

P.T.O.

31, Vineyard Hill Road,
Wimbledon Park.
London SW19.

Sept. 9. 1956.

Dear Mr Newman,

I am afraid I cannot help you very much with the two points you have raised in connection with counterfeit $\frac{1}{2}^d$.

1. The 'evasive' type of halfpence certainly circulated extensively in England, along with what we call the "facsimile" type i.e. those closely imitating the genuine pieces, but I cannot find any statement that they were intended for America, as well. But from the nature of their origin as pieces produced in huge quantities for sale to any who might wish to buy them, it think it is extremely likely that they were also ordered from America. The evasions probably started in about 1751, to dodge the law of 1742 which made forgers of copper liable to 2 years imprisonment. In 1771 counterfeiting was made a felony, and this was no doubt the reason for the great numbers of the evasive kind dated 1771 onwards, but it is important to realise that the 'law-dodging' evasions really started in 1751, as already mentioned.
2. No - I cannot recall ever having seen any reference to the use of the expression "Bungtown" to English counterfeits. As you say - they were commonly called 'Birmingham halfpence' or 'Brumagens' (Incidentally this is my home town!), but they were not, of course, put directly into circulation by the B'ham makers - they were sold to agents, who often resold them to sub-agents - hence they were distributed all over the country; each making a good profit in the deal.

I do not actually collect these pieces; I have a few, but none dated 1777 or thereafter. As you have probably noticed, the majority of the counterfeits are struck, rather than cast, the reason being, I suppose, that B'Rain was always well provided with die-sinkers from the Button manufacturing.

I remember seeing recently, some long articles on your "Numismatist" for Apr-June 1956 by Peterson - but obviously you will be well acquainted with this: it's a pity the illustrations aren't better as there is a fine selection of pieces.

I'm sorry I can't be more helpful in answering your queries.

Yours sincerely,

C. Wilson Peck

December 10, 1956

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31, Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

I wanted to wait until I had done further research before answering your letter of September 9th and thank you for your information concerning evasions and Bungtown coppers.

I have reached the conclusion that Bungtown is entirely an American word and referred to counterfeit halfpence made in America and from that spread to counterfeit halfpence of all types but not to evasions. I have never found any evidence of evasions circulating in America.

With respect to the use of farthing tokens in America, I have reference in The Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series (1574-1660), pages 285 and 290, to a license to Lord Maltravers for stamping farthings for export (Vol. IX, item 132) and a license to Lord Maltravers for making certain farthings (Vol. X, part of item 10). Do you happen to have copies of either of these licenses as it occurred to me that even though these matters were never carried out for America they ought to be included in my book. If there is any book which gives a further description of these licenses perhaps you could refer me to it.

In any event, thanks for your helpfulness and if there is anything I can do for you from this end, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

16 Dec. 1956

31, Vineyard Hill Road,
Wimbledon Park.
London. S.W.19.

Dear Mr Newman,

Many thanks for yours of Dec 10th. While at the British Museum recently, I came across a reference to Bungtown Copper, but as it is in one of your own journals, I expect you have already seen it, viz: American Journal of Numismatics, Oct. 1898, p. 67 — "Bungtown Coppers — Origin of the Name" by Samuel A Green.

I was very interested in your query about the Maltravers farthings. I have checked up your references in the State Paper Room at the BM, but I can't trace the original documents. The entry in The Calendar of State papers, Colonial Series (1574-1660), p. 290, states that Lord Maltravers was licensed to stamp farthings for 21 years, and "utter the same" in all his Majesty's plantations, except Maryland. This is extremely interesting to me also & I shall incorporate this piece of information in my own mss. (with due acknowledgments to you). I suggest one further possible reference to this subject — again an American work — Winthrop's "History of New England", Boston 1825, p. 156. If you find anything, I wonder if you would oblige me with a copy of the relevant matter — verbatim that is, if it is not too lengthy. I am hoping — perhaps too optimistically — to get my book to the printers within the next six months, which will make nearly 9 years.

Yours sincerely,

C. Wilson Peck

Mr Eric P. Newman
400, Washington Avenue
St. Louis, 2
Missouri
U.S.A.

C. Wilson Peck
31 Vineyard Hill Rd.
Wimbledon Park
London SW 19

December 28, 1956

Dear Mr. Peck:

400 Washington Ave.,
St. Louis 2 Mo., U.S.A.

I certainly was pleased to learn in your letter of December 16, 1956 that my Maltraver questions were helpful to you. I have a substantial amount of information worked up for my book on copper coins circulating in early America. Within the week the Amer. Num. Soc. has published my monograph on "Coinage for Colonial Virginia". A copy will be sent to the British Museum and if you do not have it available soon please let me know. It is No. 135 of their series.

I am sure that we can help each other, but I am not sure of the confines of your research and would appreciate knowing how far into the American situation you plan to go. The Virginia coinage was made at the Royal Mint as you know. You may be familiar with my article on the James II 1/24th real in tin which was intended for the plantations. It is in the "Numismatist" for July, 1955 and the British Museum or Seaby has a copy. I have available reprints if you need one.

Let us find the Maltraver licenses. I think you might try the Public Records Office as they have gathered much material from all departments. In addition to the references of Vol X part of Item 10 and Vol. IX item 132 there is a letter from Sir John Harvey, Gov of Virginia to Secy Sir Francis Windebank dated June 26, 1636, relative to them. I also have a reference to the Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series to page 266 in addition to pp. 238, 285 and 290. Will you try to obtain copies of these items from the Public Records Office and send them to me after you have them duplicated. I will gladly pay the expense for the copies.

Another item which has mystified me is a letter from William Wood to the Lords of Trade about coinage for America which has an impossible date. The Public Records Office has the item under C.O. 323/10 f. 132 and says it is dated June 21, 1738. In the article ~~only~~ William Wood by Philip Nelson there is an addendum slip dating it as June 21, 1728. Since Wood died in 1730 Nelson is more probably right, but since Wood's patents were revoked before then I am wondering if you could look at the letter and see what it really is. Order a copy of it for me or make a copy as I think it will be helpful to you too.

Coming back to Maltravers for a moment the 1637-8 Virginia legislature refused to let Maltravers tokens be circulated. There is a long discussion of the matter (See: "Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia" published in 1915)

I need help on another coin the British Museum collection. The Good Samaritan shilling is a counterstamp of the scene of the Good Samaritan on a Massachusetts shilling of 1652. This counterstamp may have been the seal of the "Commissioners for sick and Wounded seamen and Prisoners of War" which was organized Nov. 11, 1664 and continued till 1667. It was revived again for the 1672-4 war. Is there a history of this organization or anyone who knows how to find out about it. The only information I have is from John Evelyn's diary (pages 390 and 391 of the 1956 edition edited by E. S. DeBeer). If I can locate the impression of the seal I will have solved an amazing hoax.

I certainly wish we could have met when I was in England last summer. We may come again this summer and if so I will be glad to let you know.

Best wishes for the new year and please assign me some tasks for you as I have suggested some for you.

Cordially

September 28, 1959

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31, Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London S.W.19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

In 1956 you wrote me that within six months your book would be finished and on its way to publish. You will recall that I asked you certain information with respect to British halfpence evasions and gave you some data on licenses to Lord Maltravers.

If your book has been published, would you be kind enough to send me a copy, with a statement.

In the last few years I have published a few books and articles and expect to have an article in the British Numismatic Journal to be published shortly. I correspond with Michael Dolley, of the British Museum, rather often and just missed seeing him in Sweden this summer.

My kindest greetings and personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

3 Oct 59

31, Vineyard Hill Road,
Wimbledon Park,
London SW19.

Dear Mr Newman,

It was nice to hear from you again. I certainly do remember your queries about evasions & also that you were kind enough to put me wise on an interesting point regarding the Maltravers patent. This, I have managed to incorporate with acknowledgements to you. I also remember, with some regret, that I was extremely preoccupied at the time & I had to ask our mutual friend, RHM to reply to you on my behalf. I do hope you did not consider this too discourteous.

As regards my book; much has happened since 1856; in particular, it was at about this time, when the book was virtually ready to go to press, that the Trustees of the British Museum offered to publish my work as an Official BM Catalogue, subject, of course, to my adding much extra matter, eg Sources, Requests etc of the coins in their collection. It was an overwhelming compliment which I accepted after some hesitation. Further delay was caused through our having to wait over a year to fit the cost of publication into their annual budget.

Now, I think I can say with certainty that the Cat. will be out before the end of this year; and I can assure you, after working on it for 11 years, I shall be heartily glad to see the end of it. I am already bracing myself to meet the critics!

Kindest regards

Yours sincerely,

C. Wilson Peck

May 31, 1960

Mr. Charles Wilson Peck
31 Vinyard Hill Road
London, S.W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

I wish to congratulate you on the monumental accomplishment in completing your work on British Copper Coinage, etc. The portions which I have read and studied indicate the enormous amount of work which you put into this undertaking. The recognition by the British Museum that it was something they wished to publish was a true measure of its merit since much material had been published on the subject already. The photography is particularly excellent.

I am going to South Africa for my summer holiday and coming back through London. Michael Dolley wrote me that it would be pleasant for my wife and myself to meet you but, unfortunately, Michael and his wife are, apparently, going to the seaside from the middle of August until the middle of September. We will probably arrive in London about September 6 or 7 and fly home on September 11.

I am making substantial progress in my study of the copies of English halfpence made and circulated in America and have been reading microfilm of our early newspapers for a substantial period. The effect of the Birmingham facsimiles on the currency of early America is amazing, however, there is almost no way for me to tell the difference between the British facsimiles and the American facsimiles except in a few specific instances.

Again, may I compliment you on your masterpiece.

Sincerely,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

11 June 1960

Dear Mr Newman,

Very many thanks for your letter & very kind references to my Catalogue. Its a relief to feel it is finished after so long.

Yes, I'm afraid Dolley will be away at the time you will be passing through London in September, but this need not prevent our meeting, unless of course I chance to be away also!

I learned something of your work on the counterfeit halfpence made in America from George Fued; whom I met one night at the Royal Numismatic Society, last month.

I showed him what few I had in the way of facsimile $\frac{1}{2}$ ds, in fact I could find about 20 or so to study at his leisure, but I fear none will prove to be American-struck.

I only touched on counterfeits in my Catalogue in connection with the general historical background to the series - and, of course, on ways of detecting them from the genuine coins.

Mr Fued impressed me as a very energetic worker & I much admired his coin photographs.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Mrs Norwell when she was over here early this year. What a very interesting & knowledgeable lady she is.

If you would care to get in touch with me when you are here in Sept I shall be delighted

My telephone is Waterloo 5656

between say 10am to noon & 2pm to 4-30pm.
and Wimbledon 1120 (at home)
say from 6pm onwards.

Yours sincerely,

C. W. Peck

Our ref: 932-3

14 June 1963

Dear Sir,

A n order has been put in hand for negative photostats of the documents you quote in your letter of 11 June.

There will be a delay of about two weeks before the copies are ready for despatch.

Yours faithfully,

A. N. Harri

for Secretary.

AMH/DRM

20 June 1963

Our ref: S/N 932-933

The Secretary of the Public Record Office desires to inform you that the Uncertified Photostats which you ordered in your letter of 13 June 1963 are now completed, and will be forwarded to you on receipt of a cheque drawn on an English account or International money order (payable in United Kingdom currency to "Public Record Office") for £1. 2s. 6d. the amount due for the balance of Fees including postage and packing.


SAS/DRM

April 1, 1964

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31 Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London, S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

You will recall that a few years ago we had lunch together, in London, to discuss numismatics, and, particularly, some of the interesting problems I was working on, namely, the circulation of counterfeit British halfpence in America.

You also were very kind to me in mentioning my name on page 47 of your book for the very minor help which I gave you.

Q. David Bowers told me, a few days ago, that you were selling your collection and that he had purchased a substantial amount of nineteenth and twentieth century material. I would be most interested in acquiring a reasonable amount of your counterfeit halfpence and farthings of English coppers and other copper pieces of the eighteenth century.

Would you be kind enough to let me know whether we would be able to make an appointment to work this out. I am coming to England this summer, probably in July, as my wife and I have our camping car in London and expect to camp in rural England. I could, of course, spend sufficient time with you to work out an acquisition of such items as you would wish to sell.

As you know, I am a private collector, primarily engaged in research and writing, on numismatics, as a hobby. The few books and articles I have written do not measure up to the monumental accomplishments of yours. However, I am writing one on counterfeit and imitation coppers used in America and am very anxious to acquire as complete a collection as I can.

Would you be kind enough to let me hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
P.O. Box 14020
St. Louis, Missouri 63178
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

P.S. I would be interested in any Anglo ^{American} material - if you collect them.

15 April 1964.

Dear Mr Newman,

It was nice to hear from you again.

While it is true that I have sold a portion of my English Copper Collection viz - coins from Geo IV to 1963, I have no intention of parting with the rest of the collection, which, as it now stands covers the period from Eliz I to the end of Geo III.

I would be quite agreeable to letting you have the small group of Geo I to Geo III Contemporary forgeries however, but I fear those that I have are not the kind you really want. There are only about 25 of them & they are just plain "facsimile" type pieces; there are no 'evasions' among them, nor any direct reference to America.

July seems a long way off yet & I cannot foresee what I shall be doing then - maybe I shall be on holiday part of the month, but I suggest that, if you ~~are~~ are still interested in these few pieces such as I have described, you will let me know later when you will know your

time of arrival over here - we can think about it again. Unfortunately, I shall not be able to show you my main collection as it will be in the bank - but the forgeries are still at home.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely,

C. W. Bonfield

Mr. Eric P. Newman

PO Box 14020
St Louis, Missouri
USA.

April 22, 1964

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31, Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London, S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

It was very nice, as always, to hear from you.

With respect to the forgeries which you have on hand, the facsimile type are exactly the ones I am interested in. The evasions I am not interested in because I have concluded the evasions never circulated in America. I have over 250 different forgeries of the facsimile type already and am glad to add to them. If you want to send me your forgeries by mail, perhaps that would be the most practical. I had thought that you might have a very large collection of them.

I have completed some very exciting research on these facsimiles about which I believe I wrote you, last, many years ago, which are called "Bungtowns" in America. I have been researching the word "Bungtown" and finally determined that its meaning is a coarse pornographic one, namely, "asshole town". Shakespeare, in the gravediggers scene, in Hamlet, uses "bung-hole" in a similar manner and Eric Partridge, the world authority on Shakespeare slang, has confirmed my research and plans to use it in his next edition of "Bawdy Shakespeare."

My most recent writing is being published, serially now on the subject of nature printing on paper currency. It involves a method of stereotyping from actual leaves which process Benjamin Franklin invented in 1739 and has never been known until last year. I will gladly send you a reprint as soon as its publication in The Numismatist is completed.

My very kindest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

April 22, 1964

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31, Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London, S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

It was very nice, as always, to hear from you.

With respect to the forgeries which you have on hand, the facsimile type are exactly the ones I am interested in. The evasions I am not interested in because I have concluded the evasions never circulated in America. I have over 250 different forgeries of the facsimile type already and am glad to add to them. If you want to send me your forgeries by mail, perhaps that would be the most practical. I had thought that you might have a very large collection of them.

I have completed some very exciting research on these facsimiles about which I believe I wrote you, last, many years ago, which are called "Bungtowns" in America. I have been researching the word "Bungtown" and finally determined that its meaning is a coarse pornographic one, namely, "asshole town". Shakespeare, in the gravediggers scene, in Hamlet, uses "bung-hole" in a similar manner and Eric Partridge, the world authority on Shakespeare slang, has confirmed my research and plans to use it in his next edition of "Bawdy Shakespeare."

My most recent writing is being published, serially now on the subject of nature printing on paper currency. It involves a method of stereotyping from actual leaves which process Benjamin Franklin invented in 1739 and has never been known until last year. I will gladly send you a reprint as soon as its publication in The Numismatist is completed.

My very kindest personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

31, Vineyard Hill Road,
Wimbledon Park, London SW19

26 May 64

Dear Mr Newman,

After a quite unnecessarily long delay - for which I apologise - I am writing to tell you that I have - today - posted off to you by Ordinary Sea mail, the 27 'Bungtowns' - or perhaps more precisely 22 of them + 5 pre George III. The latter may not interest you but please don't return them.

I have kept only three - viz those used to illustrate PL 50 w, x + y in my Catalogue.

I really don't attach much monetary value to these pieces I have sent you - so far as I am concerned I don't want anything for them. In a sense I am rather pleased that they are passing on to someone who might make far better use of them than I can.

I only accumulated these for as examples of what I had, if necessary, to discuss on forging in that period.

Your work sounds very interesting + worthwhile +

I was extremely interested in the meaning of Bungtown + its link with Shakespeare. We live & learn!

I am very pleased to be able to tell you that I have recently been accepted as an Associate Member of the AHS,

Please don't trouble to reply to this - just let me know in due course when the pieces reach you. I think you will agree they are all in nice state - one thing I could never tolerate was any trace of corrosion on my coins.

With very kindest regards

Yours sincerely

Chorlson Peck

8, June, 1964

Mr. C. Wilson Peck
31 Vineyard Hill Road
Wimbledon Park
London, S. W. 19, England

Dear Mr. Peck:

The group of forgeries arrived and I am very pleased to have them. They are, as you say, in lovely condition compared to the way those forgeries are usually found. You were very kind to let me have them and I look forward to my chance to reciprocate.

I would like to give you a puzzle. I have in my collection, a coin, photocopies of which are enclosed herewith. It is copper, weighs 133 grains, has a specific gravity of 9.2. It is, apparently, a halfpenny in some way put out for The Pretender, James III.

Last year I sent it to Spink's and they brought it to the British Museum. The British Museum said that it was a cast. What bothers me is that that is not a satisfactory answer. There is no medal known with this obverse so my question is, a cast of what? The reverse, of course, is the George I reverse. Even if it was a cast it still could have been a monetary activity on behalf of James III.

It certainly is not a forgery made for collectors as it was not priced to me as being more than a routine pattern. I am not able to find that anything like it exists. Do you have any thoughts on it?

I am leaving for England on 1, July, and will bring the coin with me if it intrigues you.

Again, many thanks for your kindness.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
P.O.Box 14020
St.Louis, Missouri 63178
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

27 Counterfeit British Halfpence
given to me by C. Wilson Peck June 1964
of London

William III cast no date visible

1719 George I cast

1719 Geo I cast

1757 Geo II

1757 Geo II same obv. differ

1770 Geo III ✓

1773 Geo III ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

1774 Geo III ✓ ✓ ✓

1775 Geo III ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ all diff. one is double struck
rev.

1776 Geo III ✓ ✓ both alike